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B-1B MARITIME SUPPORT CAPABILITY

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The US and its Allies are dependent on sea lanes for both economic livelihood and military presence. Any interruption of maritime shipping lanes or interference with the movement of naval forces could have the gravest consequences. In periods of tension or active conflict, the Soviet Navy could threaten our sea lines of communication. As a result, the US must have the capability to assess and counter any maritime threat with appropriate and timely forces in any part of the globe, whether on the seas or in coastal areas.

Our US naval sea-going forces are finite; they cannot stand nearby and protect every part of the free world at a given instance. The B-1B Long Range Combat Aircraft (LRCA), a multi-role bomber, has a great potential to complement our US naval forces with additional firepower -- a force multiplier which could project power rapidly into any conflict arena. The gamut of maritime roles and missions that a bomber could augment include sea surveillance, aerial mine-laying, anti-ship warfare and inland power projection. A LRCA employed on station in a matter of hours after a theater commander directs the execution of a maritime support role complements our naval forces through a rapid, incisive response to a conflict situation. The LRCA could sustain such a firepower response until later arriving US warships' weapons can be brought to bear in the conflict.

Maritime missions have the potential of occurring anywhere around the globe. Currently, the three most likely areas are the Persian Gulf, North Atlantic, and Mediterranean regions. The Persian Gulf region is a major supplier of oil to the Western world. Should an enemy interdict this source of energy, the result could be catastrophic to free world economies and military readiness. The North Atlantic, specifically the Baltic Sea, provides exit routes for the Soviet Navy from their Northern ports. Mediterranean port facilities could serve as major transportation links for Soviet war supplies in that region as well as in the Persian Gulf. Numerous other port facilities, inland waterways and trans-shipment points around the world could provide logistics support to the Soviets.

For example, in time of conflict, US air power could choke off North Atlantic sea routes to reduce Soviet naval force effectiveness. Likewise, air power could deny Soviet naval forces an exit from the Black Sea through the Bosphorus Straits and the Dardanelles into the Mediterranean Sea. The B-1Bs relatively high speed, long range and substantial payload capability make it ideally suited for use in the execution of both offensive and defensive operations. Because of their rapid reaction capability (measured in hours) and inherent flexibility to adapt to swiftly changing world events, a B-1B equipped with appropriate weapons and sensors could provide a significant force multiplier.

The Soviet surface fleet is formidable and its defensive capability is robust. However, the B-1B has the capability to carry heavy payloads to the various targets and survive these defenses on any of the maritime missions involving hostilities -- mine-laying, anti-ship and inland power projection.

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Numerous areas throughout the world could be mined to disrupt Soviet naval operations. However, one area is particularly significant in checking Soviet naval power -- the Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom (GI-UK) gap. A typical mine-laying mission might consist of a high-low-high radius mission profile. On reaching the drop area, the bomber descends to low altitude for weapon release in a predetermined pattern to obtain maximum coverage with a minimum number of mines. Depending on mission distance and weapon load, the B-1B may require tanker support to extend its range capability or achieve mission objectives with a minimum number of sorties. The B-1B could begin "seeding" the mines within hours after the decision to close the sea lanes.

A B-1B with appropriate sensors and using anti-ship weapons has the capability to locate and attack Soviet naval formations. Weapon possibilities include command guided rockets, medium range air-to-surface missiles, HARPOON and the GBU-15. Depending on the defensive capability of the naval formations, these standoff weapons should provide an adequate margin of safe operation against various ship-borne defenses.

The ability to neutralize enemy port facilities, trans-shipment points, nearby inland waterways or coastal military installations is an essential element to control of the sea lanes. In times of increased tension transitioning to open hostilities, a theater commander may require a rapid but potent response to destroy or delay an enemy's fighting ships or support elements in reaching their potential objectives.

Currently, US aircraft carriers furnish this capability to an established theater of operations only if the carrier and its attached air elements are in-theater. If not, the NCA incurs the "steaming time" associated with the deployment of the carrier task force, assuming these assets are available. If several days are involved in moving naval forces into the conflict arena, the response time may not meet the needs of the NCA or a theater commander.

On the other hand, a B-1B could react in a timely fashion to the theater commander's requirements and deliver sustained firepower until the arrival of appropriate sea-going forces. As shown in the Joint OSD/Air Force Bomber Alternatives Study, as few as seven B-1B sorties per day with conventional 500 pound bombs equals the firepower of a Nimitz-Class aircraft carrier.

A sea surveillance mission is one of simple endurance involving the detection, identification and tracking of ships. This mission encompasses surveillance of enemy forces as well as observations of friendly force convoys and naval units. The ability to perform sea surveillance is an attribute of the B-1B because of its: (i) relatively high speed and endurance, (ii) long range, (iii) good communications capability, and (iv) onboard sensor complement -- a high resolution radar and a radar/communications receiver/processor.

The multi-role long range bomber is the only vehicle that can provide a quick reaction (measured in hours) on a global basis to a conventional naval conflict situation. It furnishes the NCA with an added capability and complements the US naval forces charged with responsibilities for sea lane control and power projection. In addition, through the bomber's ability to rapidly project power into a conflict arena and sustain that power, it has a deterrent potential because of the NCA's ability to exercise this weapon system as a visible show of force and national resolve. The B-1B complements our US naval capability; it is a force multiplier.